



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
Wednesday, February 21, 2024**

**HB 5048, An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The
Biennium Ending June 30, 2025**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 5048, An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2025**. CHA supports increased funding for The Diaper Bank of Connecticut in support of *Diaper Connections* and opposes the rescission of increased Medicaid rates for ambulance providers and the transition of certain HUSKY A beneficiaries to Covered Connecticut.

Connecticut hospitals are critical to their communities. They are confronting the challenges posed by a post-pandemic healthcare system with an exemplary healthcare workforce that continues to provide outstanding care. But challenges remain. Hospitals are treating sicker patients, it continues to be challenging to hire and retain staff, and the financial headwinds are grave. Through it all, hospitals are steadfast, providing high-quality, 24-hour care for everyone who walks through their doors, focusing on making Connecticut's healthcare system more equitable, and driving world-class innovation right here in Connecticut.

First, CHA supports enhanced state funding for The Diaper Bank of Connecticut (DBCT), so that the DBCT can maintain its support for and expand *Diaper Connections*, a first-of-its-kind partnership between Connecticut hospitals, the DBCT, and CHA. According to the DBCT, an increase from its current \$737,000 in state funding to \$2,000,000, would allow DBCT to maintain *Diaper Connections* support for the 2,200 babies in the program today and expand the program to an additional 1,300 babies. The increased funding would also allow DBCT to expand services to 800 additional children through its standard distribution network beyond those already supported through the DBCT's work.

Established in November 2022, Diaper Connections has implemented screening for diaper need at Connecticut hospitals and offers diaper distribution through local hospitals and partnerships between hospitals and community-based organizations. The program ensures supplies of diapers are available each month to families who need them and ensures families identified with a need for diapers are connected in the immediate postpartum period and through out pediatric healthcare visits.

Diapers are a material basic need, like food and shelter, and are essential to the health and economic success of families. Specific to health, diaper need is related to several maternal and child health conditions, including maternal depression, poor infant sleep, infant and child urinary tract infections, and diaper dermatitis (known as “diaper rash”). Diaper need is also a structural issue impacting a family’s income and ability to leave a child at a child care center so that a caregiver can attend work or school.

Continued state funding commensurate with growing need is vital to ensure The Diaper Bank of Connecticut can continue to meet the needs of Connecticut families in partnership with community organizations and through collaborations such as *Diaper Connections*.

Second, CHA opposes the proposed Medicaid rate rescission for ambulance providers.

HB 5048 proposes to eliminate the Medicaid rate increase made to ambulance providers in last year’s budget. The Department of Social Services (DSS) in its recently released study of Medicaid reimbursement rates recognized the need to focus on a process to increase provider reimbursement rates to support access to care for individuals enrolled in the Medicaid program. The Governor’s budget proposes eliminating the increase made just last year for ambulance providers, as it develops a more fulsome approach to increasing Medicaid rates. The immediate need for the funding appropriated last year is clear, and CHA believes that the increase should be provided even as DSS completes its comprehensive study.

Finally, CHA opposes the proposal to transition certain HUSKY A beneficiaries to Covered Connecticut. CHA supports both the HUSKY and Covered Connecticut programs but does not believe it is the best time to transition certain HUSKY beneficiaries to the Covered Connecticut Program. DSS, and every state in the country, is currently in the midst of reaching out to re-determine eligibility for the Medicaid program after the re-determination process was suspended during the pandemic. Given this significant undertaking, CHA believes the state should not add the additional challenge of transitioning HUSKY A beneficiaries at this time as we are concerned that the transition will result in many of those moving from HUSKY A to Covered Connecticut losing coverage.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.